

Masthead Logo

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Roanoke Valley

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HEARTBEAT

My father's eyes fix again
on nothing.
My mother cries,
and holds his mad wrists
against her forehead
for the seventh day.
Heartbeat: 212.

In the riverbed,
a nervous, bloodhaired roan
sniffs the darkness
curled at the wind's edge.
And runs;
and can't stop.

Nostrils blaring.
Mad hooves clattering on the shale.

David St. John

ROANOKE VALLEY

I have never seen such stuck-up mountains:
their valleys look like they belong

always to someone else. Here
accent is taken up with fine horses;
it braids their tails, expecting Saturday
and all other hurdles to go right.

If I were staying, I would talk up what goes
into dogfood, sell the foxes into fur.

I am used to mountains taken up with snow,
to valleys that belong to anyone who wants them; it is
the women who go about in braids there,
and naked when fine occasions come up.